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PAGE 01 LA PAZ 07372 01 OF 04 111852Z
ACTION ARA-15

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ONY-00 SS-15 /031 W
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R 111504Z SEP 78
FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2587

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 4 LA PAZ 7372

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SHUM, BL
SUBJECT: 1978 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

REF: (A) 215083, (B) 77 LA PAZ 9549, (C) LA PAZ 0694

1. SETTING: WITH A PER CAPITA INCOME ESTIMATED TO BE ABOUT \$360 IN 1978, BOLIVIA IS THE POOREST COUNTRY IN SOUTH AMERICA AND THE SECOND POOREST IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE. IN THE RURAL AREAS, THE STANDARD OF LIVING OF BOLIVIA'S FREEDOM-INVARIANTLY INDIAN POPULATION IS EVEN LOWER. THE BOLIVIAN INDIAN, GENERALLY ILLITERATE AND SERVED BY TOTALLY INADEQUATE EDUCATION-AL, HEALTH AND OTHER SERVICES, TRIES TO EKE OUT A SUBSISTANCE INCOME FROM THE THIN SOILS OF BOLIVIA'S MOUNTAIN SLOPES AND THE DESOLATE HIGH PLATEAU BETWEEN THE ANDES RANGES. SINCE THE TRAUMATIC SOCIAL REVOLUTION OF 1952, THE BOLIVIAN INDIAN HAS GENERALLY OWNED THE LAND HE WORKS AND ENJOYED UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE AND FULL RIGHTS OF CITIZENSHIP. BUT THE SUCCEEDING 25 YEARS HAVE BEEN CHARACTERIZED BY A CONTINUAL BUT INCOMPLETE PROCESS OF INTEGRATING THE INDIAN INTO THE MARKET ECONOMY AND BODY POLITIC OF THE COUNTRY. HISTORICALLY WEAK GOVERNMENTS, FREQUENT COUPS AND GENERAL POLITICAL INSTABILITY HAVE LONG BEEN IMPEDIMENTS TO ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROGRESS IN BOLIVIA AND A SOURCE OF FREQUENT

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PAGE 02 LA PAZ 07372 01 OF 04 111852Z

VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS.
THE LAST SEVEN YEARS, HOWEVER, HAVE BEEN ONES OF AN IMPROVING ENVIRONMENT IN BOLIVIA, FIRST IN TERMS OF POLITICAL STABILITY AND ECONOMIC GROWTH AND MORE RECENTLY IN TERMS OF SIGNIFICANT HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRESS. FOLLOWING SEVERAL YEARS OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL TURBULENCE, GENERAL HUGO BANZER IN 1971 LED A COUP WHICH USHERED IN SEVEN YEARS OF POLITICAL STABILITY AND IMPRESSIVE

ECONOMIC GROWTH, THE LONGEST PERIOD IN OFFICE OF ANY 20TH CENTURY BOLIVIAN GOVERNMENT. IN 1977 THE BANZER GOVERNMENT INITIATED A LIBERALIZATION OF VIRTUALLY ALL MAJOR RESTRICTIONS ON HUMAN AND POLITICAL RIGHTS: ALL REMAINING POLITICAL PRISONERS WERE FREED, ALL EXILES ALLOWED TO RETURN (UNDER THE PRESSURE OF A HUNGER STRIKE), POLITICAL PARTY AND LABOR UNION RIGHTS RESTORED, AND ELECTIONS CALLED FOR JULY 1978.

WHILE THE ELECTIONS CAMPAIGN ITSELF PROVED TO BE THE MOST OPEN AND ORDERLY SINCE 1952, THE VOTE COUNTING WAS MARRED BY SERIOUS IRREGULARITIES, AND THE NATIONAL ELECTORAL COURT ANNULLED THE RESULTS. IMMEDIATELY THEREAFTER, GENERAL JUAN PEREDA, ONE OF THE CANDIDATES IN THE ELECTION, SEIZED POWER IN A BLINDLESS COUP, THUS SETTING BACK BOLIVIA'S HISTORIC COURSE OF RETURN TO ELECTED, CONSTITUTIONAL RULE.

PRESIDENT PEREDA HAS MAINTAINED ALL THE PROGRESS ACHIEVED IN THE LAST YEAR OF THE BANZER GOVERNMENT ON RESTORING HUMAN RIGHTS AND HAS ABROGATED THE FEARED STATE SECURITY LAW WHICH SOME HAVE CONSIDERED THE LAST SIGNIFICANT INFRINGEMENT IN LAW OF MAJOR CIVIL LIBERTIES. PEREDA HAS PLEDGED TO HOLD NEW ELECTIONS AND TURN OVER POWER TO AN ELECTED GOVERNMENT WITHIN TWO YEARS.

2. RESPECT FOR THE INTEGRITY OF THE PERSON, INCLUDING FREEDOM FROM

A. TORTURE

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PAGE 03 LA PAZ 07372 01 OF 04 111852Z

ACCORDING TO INFORMED HUMAN RIGHTS PROPONENTS, THERE HAVE BEEN NO REPEAT NO ALLEGATIONS OF INCIDENTS OF TORTURE SINCE THE GOB RELEASED ALL REMAINING POLITICAL PRISONERS IN EARLY 1978.

B. CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING PUNISHMENT

WITH THE RELEASE OF ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS IN EARLY 1978, INCIDENTS OF CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING PUNISHMENT HAVE DECLINED SIGNIFICANTLY WHILE SOME INCIDENTS CONTINUE TO OCCUR INFORMED HUMAN RIGHTS PROPONENTS SAY THAT THE TREND OF RECENT YEARS TOWARD FEWER INCIDENTS AND LESS SEVERE PUNISHMENTS IS CONTINUING. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT THESE INCIDENTS ARE ENCOURAGED OR CONDONED BY THE CENTRAL AUTHORITIES.

C. ARBITRARY ARREST OF IMPRISONMENT

SINCE THE POLITICAL AMNESTY GRANTED IN JANUARY 1978, THERE HAS BEEN A SIGNIFICANT REDUCTION OVERALL IN INCIDENTS OF ARBITRARY ARREST OR IMPRISONMENT COMPARED TO PREVIOUS YEARS. THE PERMANENT ASSEMBLY ON HUMAN RIGHTS MAINTAINS THAT 450 PEOPLE WERE DETAINED WITHOUT TRIAL FOR VARIOUS PERIODS IN 1977 BUT THAT THIS FIGURE IS DOWN SUBSTANTIALLY IN 1978 (NO EXACT FIGURES AVAILABLE). WHILE THERE WAS A TEMPORARY INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF SUCH INCIDENTS, PARTICULARLY IN OUTLYING AREAS, DURING THE FIRST FEW WEEKS FOLLOWING

THE JULY 21 COUP D'ETAT BY LATE JULY, ACCORDING TO INFORMED HUMAN RIGHTS PROPONENTS, THE NUMBER OF SUCH INCIDENTS AGAIN APPEARED TO BE DECLINING. IN THE GREAT MAJORITY OF THESE INCIDENTS THE PERSON WAS DETAINED FOR A FEW HOURS OR DAYS AND THEN RELEASED UNHARMED.

D. DENIAL OF FAIR PUBLIC TRIAL

THE GOB HAS SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVED ITS PERFORMANCE IN THIS AREA SINCE 1978. WHILE JUSTICE CONTINUES TO MOVE SLOWLY IN BOLIVIA BECAUSE OF INHERENT FAULTS IN THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM--ANTIQUATED PROCEDURES, SHORTAGE OF QUALIFIED PERSONNEL, ETC.-- IN ONLY ONE REPORTED CASE DURING 1978 WAS AN INDIVIDUAL ARRESTED AND HELD FOR MORE THAN A FEW DAYS WITHOUT BEING GIVEN A FAIR PUBLIC TRIAL. THOSE POLITICAL PRISONERS REMANDED TO THE COURTS FOR TRIAL IN EARLY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 04 LA PAZ 07372 01 OF 04 111852Z

1978 WERE ALL RELEASED FOR LACK OF EVIDENCE. PARTICULARLY SIGNIFICANT IN THIS REGARD WAS THE REPEAL ON AUGUST 11 OF THE 1972 LAW OF THE SECURITY OF THE STATE WHICH ALLOWED THE GOB TO OVERRULE CONSTITUTIONAL GUARANTEES, INCLUDING HABEAS CORPUS. OF SPECIAL INTEREST TO THE US WAS THE NEGOTIATION OF A TREATY WITH THE GOB WHICH ALLOWS AMERICAN AND BOLIVIAN NATIONALS, CONVICTED OF CRIMES IN THE OTHER COUNTRY, TO SERVE OUT THEIR SENTENCES IN THEIR OWN COUNTRY. UNDER THIS TREATY SEVEN AMERICAN PRISONERS WERE REPATRIATED TO THE US IN AUGUST 1978.

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PAGE 01 LA PAZ 07372 02 OF 04 111903Z
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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 2 OF 4 LA PAZ 7372

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3. INVASION OF THE HOME

BOLIVIAN SECURITY AUTHORITIES HAVE CONTINUED IN THE PAST OCCASIONAL INVASIONS OF HOMES IN THE MINING AND OUTLYING AGRICULTURAL AREAS, BUT THE NUMBER OF INCIDENTS HAS DECLINED IN COMPARISON

TO PAST YEARS, ACCORDING TO INFORMED HUMAN RIGHTS OBSERVERS. THERE HAVE BEEN NO SUCH INCIDENTS IN LA PAZ OR IN OTHER LARGE URBAN AREAS TO OUR KNOWLEDGE.

3. GOVERNMENT POLICIES RELATING TO THE FULFILLMENT OF SUCH VITAL NEEDS AS FOOD, SHELTER, HEALTH CARE AND EDUCATION
THE GOB HAS FORMULATED A FIVE-YEAR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR THE 1976-80 PERIOD WHICH EMPHASIZES A RAPID GROWTH EXPORT ORIENTED STRATEGY, BUT ALSO INCLUDES THE GOALS OF IMPROVING NATIONAL INCOME DISTRIBUTION, INCORPORATING THE RURAL POPULATION (WHICH CONSTITUTES OVER 60 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION) INTO THE MODERN LIFE OF THE COUNTRY, AND IMPROVING THE WELFARE OF THE POOREST ELEMENTS THROUGH EDUCATION, HEALTH AND AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMS. THE GOB STRATEGY IS TO REQUEST MULTILATERAL AND BILATERAL DONOR INVESTMENTS IN THE SOCIAL SECTORS OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS. DETRACTING FROM THE GOB'S ABILITY TO MOST EFFICIENTLY UTILIZE ITS LIMITED RESOURCES TO IMPROVE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS IS WIDESPREAD CORRUPTION, MAINLY IN THE FORM OF PAYOFFS, WHICH ARE REPORTED TO OCCUR AT ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT IN BOLIVIA. IT IS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 02 LA PAZ 07372 02 OF 04 111903Z

IMPOSSIBLE TO MEASURE THE AMOUNT OF RESOURCES WHICH ARE DIVERTED AWAY FROM THE MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION, BUT SOME OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT THE AMOUNT IS SIGNIFICANT, ALTHOUGH NOT NECESSARILY GREATER IN DEGREE THAN THAT WHICH OCCURS IN OTHER DEVELOPING COUNTRIES. FROM NOVEMBER 1974 TO FEBRUARY 1978, ALL TRADE UNION RIGHTS WERE SUSPENDED AND SALARIES WERE THEORETICALLY FROZEN. WHILE IN ACTUALITY THE GOB PERMITTED REGULAR WAGE INCREASES, IN ALL OR NEARLY ALL CASES THE SIZE OF THE INCREASES WAS NOT SUFFICIENT TO COMPENSATE THE WORKERS FOR INCREASES IN THE COST OF LIVING. SINCE LABOR FREEDOMS WERE SUSPENDED AND STRIKES WERE ILLEGAL, THE UNIONS WERE UNABLE TO NEGOTIATE LARGER INCREASES. CONSEQUENTLY, REAL WAGES HAVE FALLEN FROM 1974 LEVELS. UNIONS ARE NOW FREE AGAIN TO NEGOTIATE LARGER WAGE INCREASES, BUT THE SERIOUS ECONOMIC PROBLEMS CONFRONTING THE GOB, WHICH ACCOUNTS FOR ABOUT 70 PERCENT OF NATIONAL PRODUCTION, WILL MAKE IT VERY DIFFICULT FOR MANY UNIONS TO RECOUP ALL OF THE BUYING POWER THAT THEY HAVE LOST OVER THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS.

AGRICULTURE

OVER 60 PERCENT OF THE ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE POPULATION IS ENGAGED IN AGRICULTURE. ALTHOUGH BOLIVIA IS RELATIVELY SELF-SUFFICIENT IN BASIC FOOD PRODUCTION, DEMAND HAS BEEN GROWING MORE RAPIDLY THAN PRODUCTION IN RECENT YEARS. CURRENT GOB

AGRICULTURAL POLICY, WHILE GIVING PRIORITY TO COMMERCIAL CROP DEVELOPMENT, ALSO SEEKS SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN FOOD PRODUCTION FOR DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION. THE FIVE YEAR PLAN CALLS FOR ANNUAL GROWTH IN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION TO REACH 7.4 PERCENT BY 1980. IN SUPPORT OF ITS AGRICULTURAL SECTOR OBJECTIVES, THE GOB INCREASED THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE'S BUDGET BY 56 PERCENT IN 1976, THE FIRST OPERATIONAL YEAR OF THE FIVE YEAR PLAN. HOWEVER, FROM 1977 TO 1978 THE GOB, AS PART OF AN AUSTERITY PROGRAM, WAS FORCED TO MAKE REDUCTIONS IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE'S BUDGET IN APPROX-
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PAGE 03 LA PAZ 07372 02 OF 04 111903Z

IMATELY THE SAME PERCENTAGE AS REDUCTIONS MADE IN THE BUDGETS OF OTHER MINISTRIES. THERE DO EXIST SOME GOB POLICIES WHICH HAVE A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON SMALL FARM DEVELOPMENT, BUT THEY ARE MINOR. SPECIAFICALLY, CONTROLLED INTERNAL COFFEE PRICES AND IMPORT DUTIES ON AGRICULTURAL INPUTS AFFECT SMALL FARMERS NEGATIVELY. THE EFFECT OF THESE POLICIES IS THOUGHT TO BE MINOR, HOWEVER, COMPARED WITH THE LARGE COMMITMENT OF GOB RESOURCES NOW BEING MADE TO SMALL FARM DEVELOPMENT.

USAID IS THE ONLY MAJOR DONOR WHOSE AGRICULTURAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOCUESES EXCLUSIVELY ON IMPROVING PROSPECTS FOR THE RURAL POOR. ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS OF OTHER DONORS, SUCH AS THE WORLD BANK AND THE IDB, EMPHASIZESUPPORT FOR COMMERCIAL AGRICULTURE, THERE IS, HOWEVER, INCREASED OTHER DONOR INTEREST IN PROJECTS FOR IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF RURAL LIFE.

HEALTH AND NUTRITION

THE GOB ESTIMATES THAT LIFE EXPENTANCY AT BIRTH IF 47 YEARS. INFANT MORTALITY RATES FOR CHILDREN UNDER ONE YEAR OF AGE RANGE FROM 154 PER THOUSAND NATIONALLY TO AN ESTIMATED 235 PER THOUSAND IN RURAL AREAS. THE CRUDE DETAH RATE IS 18 PERCENT PER THOUSAND. THESE

ARE AMONG THE HIGHEST SUCH RATES IN LATIN AMERICA. THE GOB'S FIVE-YEAR PLAN GOALS FOR THE HEALTH SECTOR ARE TO INCREASE LIFE EXPECTANCY FROM 47 TO 52 YEARS BY 1980, TO REDUCE MORTALITY AND MORBIDITY RATES BY SIX AND EIGHT PERCENT, RESPECTIVELY, AND STRENGTHEN HEALTH SERVICES. THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH RECEIVES ONLY 1.2 PERCENT OF THE PUBLIC BUDGET, ONLY 20 PERCENT OF WHICH IS CHANNELED TO HEALTH ACTIVITIES. DESPITE THIS LIMITED RESOURCE BASE, THE MINISTRY DOUBLED ITS INVESTMENT BUDGET IN 1976 AND HAS SINCE CONCENTRATED ON CONSTRUCTION AND RENOVATION OF HEALTH FACILITIES, CURRENTLY AVAILABLE TO ONLY 15 PERCENT OF THE RURAL PUPULATION. THE GOB AND USAIDARE IMPLEMENTING A PILOT PROJECT TO TEST SYSTEMS FOR THE DELIVERY OF LOW-COST HEALTH SERVICES TO RURAL COMMUNITIES. USAID IS ALSO PROVIDING
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PAGE 04 LA PAZ 07372 02 OF 04 111903Z

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO THE GOB FOR DEVELOPMENT OF AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO NATIONAL NUTRITION PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING. THE GOB INTENDS TO FOLLOW THESE ACTIVITIES WITH HEALTH SERVICES AND NUTRITION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS OF NATIONAL SCOPE. TO DATE, THE GOB HAS REFUSED TO PROVIDE ANY PUBLICLY-FINANCED FAMILY PLANNING SERVICES TO LOW INCOME SAMILIES, BUT CONTRACEPTIVE DEVICES ARE AVAILABLE THROUGH COMMERCIAL SOURCES.

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PAGE 01 LA PAZ 07372 03 OF 04 112122Z

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 3 OF 4 LA PAZ 7372

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EDUCATION

OF THE TOTAL POPULATION OVER 15 YEARS OLD, 60 PERCENT ARE ILLITERATE AND 65 PERCENT DO NOT SPEAK SPANISH AS A FIRST LANGUAGE. FIFTY-NINE PERCENT OF THE SCHOOL-AGE PUPULATION LIVE IN RURAL AREAS BUT ONLY 36 PERCENT OF THESE ATTEND SCHOOL, MOSTLY THROUGH PRIMARY GRADES (1-3) ONLY A MERE 1 PERCENT OF RURAL CHILDREN ENROLL IN SECONDARY SCHOOL. THE FIVE YEAR PLAN CALLS FOR UPGRADING THE QUALITY, RELEVANCE AND COVERAGE OF EDUCATION FOR SOME ONE MILLION RURAL YOUTH BETWEEN THE AGES OF 5 AND 19 AND FOR REDUCING ILLITERACY BY TWO PERCENT BY 1980. EDUCATION EXPENDITURES CONSTITUTE 28.5 PERCENT OF THE GOB BUDGET, THE LARGEST SINGLE ITEM. HOWEVER, OVER HALF OF EDUCATION EXPENDITURES ARE IN THE URBAN AREAS, WHEREAS TWO-THIRDS OF THE PUPULATON IS RURAL. FURTHERMORE, OVER 90 PERCENT OF ECUCATION EXPENDITURES GO FOR SALARIES, RATHER THAN FOR BUILDINGS, EQUIPMENT, TEACHING MATERIALS OR MAINTENANCE. THE GOB, WITH USAID'S SUPPORT, IS INVOLVED IN THREE PROJECTS DESIGNED TO REFORM RURAL SCHOOL CURRICULA,

IMPROVE TEACHER TRAINING AND UPGRADE SCHOOL AND TEACHER TRAINING
COLLEGE FACILITIES.

HOUSING

THE GOB HOUSING PROGRAM HAS BEEN DIRECTED AT URBAN REQUIREMENTS.
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PAGE 02 LA PAZ 07372 03 OF 04 112122Z

RECENTLY, HOWEVER, THE GOVERNMENT HAS EXPRESSED INTEREST IN
EXTENDING LOW-COST HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS AND THE SAVINGS AND LOAN
SYSTEM TO THE COUNTRYSIDE. A GOB REQUEST FOR A HOUSING INVESTMENT
GUARANTEE LOAN, IF APPROVED, WILL CONSTITUTE THE GOVERNMENT'S
FIRST RURAL LOW-COST, SELF-HELP HOUSING ACTIVITY.

EMPLOYMENT

THERE IS SUBSTANTIAL URBAN POVERTY, BUT THE NATION'S RAPID
ECONOMIC PROGRESS IS RECENT YEARS, INCLUDING AN URBAN CONSTR-
UCTION BOOM, APPEARS TO HAVE RAISED URBAN EMPLOYMENT AND MUCH OF
THE INDUSTRIAL AND INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT CONTAINED IN THE
FIVE-YEAR PLAN CAN BE EXPECTED TO HELP THE URBAN POOR. THE GOB
ALSO IS ADOPTING SOME SPECIAL PROGRAMS IN THIS FIELD, SUCH AS THE
RECENT FORMATION, INITIALLY IN LA PAZ, OF BOLIVIA'S FIRST GOVERNMENT
EMPLOYMENT SERVICE, AND INITIATION OF A TRAINING PROGRAM FOR SKILLED
WORKERS WHICH IS EXPECTED TO EXPAND RAPIDLY, WITH WORLD BANK
FINANCING, IN COMING YEARS.

ROADS AND ELECTRICITY

THE LARGER PART OF THE SOCIALLY-NEGLECTED PEOPLE OF BOLIVIA
ARE RURAL DWELLERS IN ISOLATED SMALL COMMUNITIES WITH HARDLY
A SHOW OF PUBLIC SERVICES. ONLY 1 PERCENT OF THE RURAL
POPULATION HAS ELECTRICITY. THE GOB HAS DECIATED A SUBSTANTIAL
PORTION OF ITS FIVE YEAR DEVELOPMENT PLAN TO PROVIDING ALL-
WEATHER ACCESS ROADS AND ELECTRICAL SERVICE TO THIS WIDELY-
DISPERSED RURAL POPULATION. USAID IS COOPERATING WITH THIS PLANNING
THRUST THROUGH PROJECT LOANS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF SOME 2,500
KILOMETERS OF ACCESS ROADS AND EXTENSION OF ELECTRICAL SERVICE TO
SOME
120,000 RURAL FAMILIES.

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PAGE 03 LA PAZ 07372 03 OF 04 112122Z

4. RESPECT FOR CIVIL AND POLITICAL LIBERTIES, INCLUDING--

A. FREEDOM OF THOUGHT, SPEECH, PRESS, RELIGION AND ASSEMBLY

DURING 1978 THE GOB REMOVED ALL LEGAL RESTRICTIONS INHIBITING FULL AND FREE EXERCISE OF THESE RIGHTS. IN FEBRUARY 1978 THE 1974 DECREES SUSPENDING TRADE UNION FREEDOMS WERE LIFTED. SINCE THEN OTHER DECREES AFFECTING THE UNIVERSITIES AND PROFESSIONAL GROUPS HAVE ALSO BEEN REPEALED. DURING AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER OF 1978 MOST MEMBERS OF THE BOLIVIAN UNIVERSITY SYSTEM HELD ELECTIONS FOR UNIVERSITY AND STUDENT AUTHORITIES AND REGAINED THEIR FULL UNIVERSITY AUTONOMY. THERE ARE NOW NO LEGAL OR OTHER RESTRICTIONS INHIBITING FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY.

BOLIVIAN NEWSPAPERS AND PERIODICALS ARE FREE OF OFFICIAL RESTRICTIONS. YET THE BOLIVIAN PRESS IS WIDELY BELIEVED TO PRACTICE A FORM OF SELF-CENSORSHIP. CRITICISM OF THE GOB IN THE PRESS IS VERY LIMITED. THE COMMITTEE ON FREEDOM OF THE PRESS OF THE INTER-AMERICAN PRESS ASSOCIATION (IPA) IN OCTOBER 1977 SAID THAT "EXTRA-OFFICIAL SOURCES" HAVE STATED THAT THE BOLIVIAN PRESS EXERCISES ITS RIGHTS WITH "GREATEST PRUDENCE" AND THAT AT PRESENT THE PRESS EXISTS IN A STATE OF "GREATER FREEDOM".

B. FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT WITHIN THE COUNTRY, FOREIGN TRAVEL, AND IMMIGRATION

IN THE PAST YEAR THE GOB HAS ELIMINATED ALL RESTRICTIONS ON FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT WITHIN BOLIVIA, AND ON FOREIGN TRAVEL. ALL BOLIVIANS LIVING IN EXILE WERE ALLOWED TO RETURN FOLLOWING A JANUARY 1978 POLITICAL AMNESTY. MOREOVER, THE SYSTEM OF "RESIDENCIAMIENTO" (RESTRICTIONS ON MOVEMENT OR ACTIVITY) HAS BEEN COMPLETELY ABOLISHED. THUS ALL BOLIVIANS NOW ENJOY COMPLETE FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT.

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PAGE 01 LA PAZ 07372 04 OF 04 112153Z
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2590

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 4 OF 4 LA PAZ 7372

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C. FREEDOM OF PARTICIPATION IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS

ON JULY 9, 1978 BOLIVIA HELD ITS FIRST NATIONAL ELECTIONS SINCE 1966. THE ELECTIONS WERE DESIGNED TO GIVE BOLIVIA ITS FIRST CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT SINCE THE OVERTHROW OF PRESIDENT SILES SALINAS IN 1969.

THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN UP UNTIL THE WEEKEND OF THE ELECTION WAS, BY BOLIVIAN STANDARDS, OPEN AND HONEST. WHILE THERE WAS SOME INTIMIDATION OF OPPOSITION POLITICIANS BY LOCAL OFFICIALS AND OTHER VIOLATIONS OF THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS, SUCH AS SIGNIFICANT BIAS ON THE PART OF THE NATIONAL TELEVISION SYSTEM IN FAVOR OF THE "OFFICIAL" CANDIDATE, THEY WERE CONSIDERABLY FEWER IN NUMBER AND FAR LESS SERIOUS THAN IN PREVIOUS ELECTION CAMPAIGNS, WHEN SERIOUS ABUSES OCCURRED, SUCH AS COMPLETELY DENYING THE OPPOSITION ACCESS TO THE COUNTRYSIDE, WHERE THE MAJORITY OF THE BOLIVIAN ELECTORATE RESIDES.

HOWEVER, WHAT PROGRESS HAD BEEN MADE DURING THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN IN RAISING THE STANDARDS OF THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS IN BOLIVIA WAS PARTLY NEGATED ON ELECTION DAY ITSELF AND DURING THE FOLLOWING DAYS OF VOTE COUNTING BY SUCH WIDESPREAD FRAUD IN FAVOR OF THE "OFFICIAL" CANDIDATE AND TO A LESSER EXTENT IN FAVOR OF ONE OF THE OPPOSITION CANDIDATES, THAT IT BECAME IMPOSSIBLE TO DETERMINE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 02 LA PAZ 07372 04 OF 04 112153Z

WITH ANY DEGREE OF ACCURACY HOW MANY VOTES ANY CANDIDATE HAD RECEIVED. THE SERIOUS EXTENT OF THE FRAUD WAS ATTESTED TO BY AN INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION INVITED TO BOLIVIA BY THE PERMANENT ASSEMBLY ON HUMAN RIGHTS. AMONG THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION WERE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE WASHINGTON OFFICE ON LATIN AMERICA AND OF THE WORLD AND US NATIONAL COUNCILS OF CHURCHES. FURTHERMORE, DURING THE LAST FEW DAYS OF THE CAMPAIGN THERE WERE A NUMBER OF INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE WHICH RESULTED IN TWO PEOPLE BEING KILLED.

AT THE REQUEST OF THE "OFFICIAL" CANDIDATE, WHO PROBABLY RECEIVED A PLURALITY OF THE TOTAL VOTE, THE ELECTION RETURNS WERE ANNULLED. THE NATIONAL ELECTORAL COURT, IN ANNULING THE ELECTIONS, SUGGESTED THAT NEW ELECTIONS BE HELD WITHIN SIX MONTHS. HOWEVER, ON JULY 21, GEN JUAN PEREDA, THE "OFFICIAL" CANDIDATE, LED A SUCCESSFUL COUP D'ETAT AGAINST PRESIDENT HUGO BANZER AND ASSUMED THE PRESIDENCY. WHILE QUITE CLEARLY THE COUP D'ETAT WAS A MAJOR SETBACK TO THE DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS THAT HAD BEEN SET IN MOTION BY PRESIDENT BANZER IN NOVEMBER 1977, GEN PEREDA HAS COMMITTED HIMSELF TO CONTINUING THE PROCESS AND HAS PROMISED NEW ELECTIONS BY AUGUST 1980. MOREOVER, HE HAS FULLY RESPECTED THE RIGHTS OF THE OPPOSITION POLITICAL PARTIES TO OPERATE FREELY WITHOUT ANY GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE.

AMONG THE ISSUES TO BE DECIDED BEFORE NEW ELECTIONS CAN BE SCHEDULED IS THE RIGHT OF TRADE UNION LEADERS TO BE CANDIDATES FOR PUBLIC OFFICE.

UNDER THE ELECTION LAW USED IN THE 1978 ELECTIONS IT WAS NOT LEGAL FOR TRADE UNION LEADERS TO BE CANDIDATES FOR NATIONAL OFFICE, BUT BECAUSE OF CONSIDERABLE PROTEST BY BOTH THE TRADE UNIONS AND THE POLITICAL PARTIES THIS PROVIDION OF THE ELECTORAL LAW IS NOW BEING RECONSIDERED.

ALTHOUGH THE SHORT-TERM EFFECTS OF THE ELECTION PROCESS WERE NEGATIVE
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PAGE 03 LA PAZ 07372 04 OF 04 112153Z

--FRAUD AND A COUP D'ETAT--OF PERHAPS GREATER SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE LONG-TERM FUTURE OF BOLIVIAN DEMOCRACY WAS A SIGNIFICANT DECREASE IN POLITICAL CONSIOSNESS DEMONSTRATED BY THE BOLIVIAN INDIAN PEASANT CLASS, WHO CONSTITUTE OVER HALF OF THE ELCTORATE. IN EVERY ELECTION SINCE UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE WAS INTODUCED IN 1952 THIS GROUP HAS SOLIDLY SUPPORTED THE GOVERNMENT CANDIDATE. IN THIS ELECTION, HOWEVER, PERHAPS HALF OF THE BOLIVIAN PEASANTRY VOTED FOR OPPOSITION CANDIDATES. THIS MEANS THAT IN THE FUTURE NO CANDIDATE, GOVERNMENT OR OPPOSITION, WILL AUTOMATICALLY BE ABLE TO ASSUME THAT HE HAS SOLID SUPPORT AMONG THIS KEY GROUP.

5. GOVERNMENT ATTITUDE AND RECORD REGARDING INTERNATIONAL AND NON-GOVERNMENT INVESTIGATION OF ILLEGAL VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS.

THE PRINCIPAL ORGANIZATION IN BOLIVIA DEDICATED TO PROMOTING RESPECT FOR INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED HUMAN RIGHTS IS THE PERMANENT ASSEMBLY ON HUMAN RIGHTS (PAHR), MANY OF WHOSE MEMBERS ARE CLERGYMENT. THE PAHR HAS MANY SUB-DIVISIONS THROUGHOUT BOLIVIA AND IS ABLY LED BY CATHOLIC PRIEST JULIO TUMIRI.

THE RECORD OF THE BANZER AND PEREDA ADMINISTRATIONS TOWARD THE PAHR DURING THE PAST YEAR HAS BEEN MIXED. THE PAHR HAS BEEN PUBLICLY CRITICIZED BY SENIOR GOB OFFICIALS FOR ITS SUPPORT OF THE HUNGER STRIKE OF ECEMBER 1977-JANUARY 1978 THAT FORCED THE GOB TO GRANT A COMPLETE POLITICAL AMNESTY AND FOR INVITING A GROUP OF INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS TO OVERSEE THE BOLIVIAN ELECTION PROCESS (SEE BELOW). MOREOVER, THE PAHR SUSPECTS THAT SOME OF THE PRESS ATTACKS LEVIED AGAINST IT BY PRIVATE GROUPS HAVE BEEN INSTIGATED BY GOB OFFICIALS. NEVERTHELESS, DESPITE THE ABOVE, THE ACTUAL WORKING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE GOB AND THE PAHR HAS BEEN RELATIVELY COOPERATIVE DURING THIS SAME PERIOD. PRESIDENT PEREDA, WHILE MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR UNDER PRESIDENT BANZER, AND CURRENT INTERIOR MINISTER LT COL RICO TORO, HAVE BOTH TRIED TO MAINTAIN A RELATIVELY COOPERATIVE WORKING RELATIONSHIP. NEVERTHELESS, ACCORDING TO THE PAHR, THE GOB IS STILL INTERCEPTING SOME OF ITS MAIL, ALTHOUGH THIS IS OCCURRING
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PAGE 04 LA PAZ 07372 04 OF 04 112153Z

MUCH LESS FREQUENTLY THAN IN 1977.

THE GOB INVITED THE OAS TO SEND A DELEGATION TO OBSERVE THE JULY 9 ELECTIONS AND ACCEPTED THEIR REPORT WITHOUT COMMENT. IN CONTRAST, HOWEVER, THE GOB WAS SEVERELY CRITICAL OF A GROUP OF INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS WHO, AT THE INVITATION OF THE PAHR, OBSERVED THE LAST FEW DAYS OF THE BOLIVIAN ELECTION PROCESS AND WHO DENOUNCED THE WIDESPREAD FRAUD CARRIED OUT IN FAVOR OF THE OFFICIAL CANDIDATE, BUT WHO DID NOT COMMENT ON INCIDENTS OF FRAUD COMMITTED IN FAVOR OF ONE OF THE OPPOSITION CANDIDATES.
BOEKER

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: HUMAN RIGHTS, REPORTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 11 sep 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978LAPAZ07372
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780370-0011
Format: TEL
From: LA PAZ
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780982/aaaacpwt.tel
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Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: ONLY
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 11
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: ONLY
Reference: 77 LA PAZ 9549, 78 LA PAZ 694
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1487064
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: 1978 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT
TAGS: SHUM, BL
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/3d617053-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014